

A
LETTER
TO

Doctor MATHER. (M)
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*Occasioned by his disingenuous Reflexions upon
a certain Pamphlet, entitled,*

SALVATION FOR ALL MEN.

*By One who wishes well to Him
in common with Mankind.*

Will you speak wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for him.
JOB.

I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.
PAUL.

B O S T O N :

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A Letter to Dr. MATHER.

Rev. Sir,

WHEN I heard you intended to appear in public, and attack a certain pamphlet, entitled *Salvation for All Men*, I expected you would offer the world some *harmless* performance, which, while it *flattered* your own friends, would give *offence* to no individual. I knew you had no talents for controversy: and that you would leave the point in dispute where you found it. However, I thought you was a person of *benevolence* and *good manners*; and that nothing would tempt you to offend against the laws of *decency* and *Christian candour*. Having studied so long in the school of Christ, I took it for granted, you understood the genius of his religion; and having been, for so many years, conversant with mankind, that you knew, others might differ from you in sentiment without being either *knaves* or *fools*. In the simplicity of my heart, I formed this idea of Dr. Mather.

But, Sir, I have mistaken your character. Your *late publication* has undeceived me. And it has led many others to renounce those favourable sentiments they were disposed to entertain, both of your understanding, and your heart. The *low arts* you there employ, in order to promote your own cause; the *unprovoked abuse* you heap upon a person, who has an equal right with yourself to publish his opinions; your *bungling affectation* of *wit*, and *sly insinuations*, prove you to be as *unfair* and *illiberal*, as you are *unpolite*. Whatever you may
think

think of it, that performance will neither advance your fame in the republic of letters, or the church of Christ.

My intention therefore, in the following address, is to reprove you for your *unchristian* behaviour. Had you offered your sentiments to the public with *modesty* and *candour*, had you opposed the doctrine of *Universal Salvation* in a *serious, rational* manner, you would never have heard from me in this strain. I have no disposition to quarrel with a person for rejecting my opinions. Though firmly persuaded that *All men will be finally happy*, yet I can bear with those who think otherwise; I can both honour and love them; and, notwithstanding our difference of sentiment, can speak well of their abilities, and contend for their character. But you, Sir, seem to imagine every man must be either an "*insidious*" knave, or *stupid fool*, who cannot subscribe to all your peculiar notions. And you think it is no injury to exhibit him as such a character, to the public, if he persists in his own opinions, and has the confidence to declare them to the world.

But, thank God, those glorious times of ignorance are over, when a *bold assertion* would pass for *argument*. The stubborn reason of men, though long tamed by *priestly dogmas*, begins now to exert itself. And serious persons will think for themselves, whatever reproach it may bring upon them. Had you considered this, you would not have offered the world such a strange performance. You would have left the dispute to other persons. Or, at least, you would have treated your opponents with more *generosity* and *candour*.

As I hinted before, this Letter is designed for your *reproof*. Not because you have undertaken to refute an "*insidious*" pamphlet, but because you have acted out of character. Because you have thrown off the modesty.

modesty of a fair disputant, and the charity of a Christian. I shall not therefore undertake to answer your arguments (or rather the arguments of those ancient writers you have quoted) but shall very briefly point out your *disingenuity*. And as the public have been witnesses of your offence, it is very proper they should be spectators of the reproof you have incurred.

And first, Sir, how could you pretend to argue the *endless* punishment of the wicked, from the application of the Hebrew word *gnolam* or the Greek word *aionios*, when you have repetedly said, in private conversation, it could be inferred from neither? That you have expressed yourself after this manner, there are many who well remember, and are ready to point out the time and place, if you desire it. A minister ought not to have one set of opinions for the closet, and another for the public view. What he asserts among his friends, he ought to maintain openly, or, at least, he ought not to contradict, while there are any alive to detect his indiscretion. I must therefore express my great surprize at your answer to Mr. Scott—that the “adjective *aionios* generally signified *everlasting*, and that you could not recollect any place where it had a different signification.” And I must think, you have treated an opponent very unfairly, to offer him arguments, which you *know* have no force in them, and which you have rejected in private conversation. What I assert at one time, I hope I shall have fortitude to maintain at another. And for the poor renown of being popular, I pray God, I may never violate the real sentiments of my heart. This instance of *unfairness*, I thought proper to mention, in the first place, as it will convince the world I have not made an unprovoked attack upon your ingenuity, nor called your modesty in question without just reason.

But

But to take a more particular view of your performance. I greatly object to the liberty you have taken with the advocate for *Universal Salvation*, and the stigma you have endeavoured to fix upon his work, by styling it "*insidious*." "*Insidious!*" did you ever consider the true import of that term? According to the common acceptation of the word, it intends an *artful treacherous intent to mislead and insnare*. And are you sure, the author of that pamphlet acted from such diabolical motives? Do you know him to be a sly, insinuating deceiver? Are you so well acquainted with his character, as to pronounce this a true description of him? If not, you ought to blush at the liberty you have taken; and beg pardon of him and the world, for the temper you have discovered.

The book, Doctor, which you oppose, made its appearance with a becoming *modesty*. It cast no illiberal reflexions: it assumed no affrontive title. It disdained those unworthy arts to which error is necessitated to recur. And trusted to its own intrinsic merit for its support. Thus inoffensive, it presumed upon good treatment. But falling into ungenerous hands, it was first stigmatized with an opprobrious epithet, and afterwards held up to public view, as a *weak*, but dangerous attempt upon the morals of society!

But *weak* as you may esteem that performance, it is not without its admirers: and *base* as you may think its author, the world regards him as a person of learning and integrity. He undertook that work with no "*insidious*" view. He wished to honour his God and Saviour; and to exhibit such a scheme of religion as should not *affront* the *sober understanding* of mankind. These *I* know to be his motives, and *you* know nothing to the contrary. I must therefore think you have acted a very unrighteous part, and such as you will condemn, in an hour of sober reflexion. But,

But, that you may feel, more sensibly, the indelicacy of your conduct, let me bring the matter home to your self. What should you think, was I to take the same liberty with your publications, as *you* have done with this "*insidious*" pamphlet. Was I to pretend the *History of your father* was artfully designed to burlesque his memory; Or that your *Sacred Minister* was intended to injure the *Muse and Language of this country*, should you not think it very uncivil usage? You certainly would. And yet, Sir, it would not be the most unnatural thing, in the world, to fall into such a mistake. The candour therefore, which has been exercised towards *you*, ought to have inspired you with the same principle.

But to follow you into the *porch* and *dome* of that elegant structure you have raised, I find the same marks of bad workmanship, as in the front. Or, to dismiss a figure I borrowed from you, I find the same evidences of an unchristian, illiberal spirit in the *premonition* and *body* of your pamphlet, as disgusted me in the *title-page*. You take all imaginable pains to render your opponents *odious*. You insinuate, that they are *wolves in sheeps cloathing*: and pretend, that the advocates for *universal Salvation* were the very dangerous persons against whom our Lord exhorted his disciples to beware. This, Doctor, is ungenerous to the last degree. And though it may pass for *argument* with *malicious bigots* or *weak enthusiasts*, it will only injure your cause with persons of real piety.

Your strictures upon the Title-page and Preface of that "*insidious*" pamphlet, are of a piece with those I have just mentioned. They are as *weak* as they are *uncandid*. You attempt to *droll* upon the authors cited in favour of *Universal Salvation*. But, believe me, you never appeared to less advantage. Such contemptuous
expressions

expressions as "*pious, good White, precious good Wesley, good Dr. Hartley,*" &c. are (as you introduce them) highly *abusive*, but are neither *ingenious* nor *sprightly*. Any person might say as much, who was disposed to trifle, and had rather *offront* a man than *convince* him.

As to your unkind attempt to confound the doctrines set forth in that pamphlet with the strange assertions of a certain *preacher*, I think it deserves the severest reprimand. This you imagined would be popular, and therefore, you condescended to such a piece of art. But Sir, you know the sentiments advanced by that stranger are essentially different from those you have undertaken to refute. You know, a scheme that makes *all* men happy at the day of judgment, cannot be confounded with one, which consigns *numbers* of the human race to *ages* of *suffering*. Your reason is not so impaired by years as to be incapable of seeing these things. I must therefore conclude, that you have, in this instance, acted a peculiarly unkind part, and taken a method to injure a cause that nothing can justify.

I likewise condemn the temper of mind which would confound an opponent, by giving his opinions an *odious* name. *White*, and the other writers in favor of *Universal Salvation*, suppose the *torments of Hell* will be analogous to the *Divine Judgments* in the present world: That is, will be of a *disciplinary* kind, and powerfully tend to make the subjects of them "*partakers of God's holiness.*" A representation of things so honourable to God, and so consistent with his parental character, the Doctor could not easily disprove. He therefore conjured up the frightful image of *purgatory*, which saved him a vast expence of thought, and served instead of a thousand arguments.

To

To point out all the instances of your dissingenuity would be impossible. I must quote the greater part of your book to give the world a just idea of your unfairness. I shall therefore, hint at a few of your *inconsistencies*, and then leave you to your own reflexions. In the 5th page of your extraordinary pamphlet, you object to the method taken by the *Well wisher of Mankind*, to illustrate and vindicate his subject. You think, he ought to have defended his opinion by arguments of his own, and not amused the world with extracts from other writers. And the reason you give is this, because "however pious and learned those writers might be, they were only weak, fallible mortals like their neighbours." Who would have imagined, after this, you would attack the "*insidious*" pamphlet, with any other weapons but your own. I supposed, when I came to this passage, I should see Doctor Mather in all his glory! Nobly disdaining all assistance both *ancient* and *modern*, I portrayed you fighting *alone* for the common opinions, and resolving to triumph by your *own* arm, or perish in the attempt. But behold *Austin* on the one side, and *Grotius* on the other. Behold a noble army of combatants, *Beza*, *Arnobius*, *Cornelius*, the Jesuite, *Chrysostom*, *Ambrose*, *Anselm*, *Witsius*, &c. &c. all engaged in your cause, and sharing with you the honour of an imaginary conquest! This, I confess, was quite unexpected. I thought, it appeared so cowardly in your antagonist to avail himself of foreign assistance, that you would never have followed his example.

Another inconsistency I will point out before I quit the subject; and that is your passing over in silence the arguments in favour of the *endless* happiness of the righteous, independent of the words rendered in our bible, *eternal* and *everlasting*. As you undertook to answer an "*insidious*" pamphlet, you ought to have
taken

taken special notice of these. They are very fatal to your side of the question. And many will desert you unless they can be set aside. As you have therefore, omitted so favourable an opportunity, as your 22d page afforded, I must suppose you thought them unanswerable.

But not to multiply words. If the most unkind reflexions, sly insinuations and illiberal abuse ought to consign any performance to oblivion, yours, Doctor, will be soon forgotten. You certainly have taken liberties that a fair disputant would reject with disdain. No man who had a good cause to maintain, would condescend to such arts, as you have employed to set off your performance. May I not then conclude you was not perfectly satisfied with your own side of the question, or that you thought it incapable of a better defence?

The man, who expects a serious-answer, must treat his opponents with *candour* and *politeness*. Had you observed this rule, as God knows my heart, I would not have written with this plainness, for any consideration. And now, if any person will take up the matter with calmness, and argue like a scholar and a Christian, he shall be heard with candour, and treated with every mark of respect. The advocates for *Universal Salvation* wish for nothing more than a fair discussion of the subject. - But all uncharitable reflexions and unprovoked abuse will, if they are worthy of notice, be chastized with due severity. If not, they will be passed by with silent contempt.

It is hard to withstand the solicitations of those we esteem, and much harder to expose ourselves to the indignation of those we fear. Whether the Doctor's complaisance or his fears dictated that illiberal reply, I will not take upon me to determine. He says he entered into the controversy, at the request of a number of "serious, virtuous, and godly persons." I hope they deserve that character. I know nothing to the contrary.

Though


Though was I to follow the example set me, I should pronounce them weak, "*insidious*" bigots, or *blind enthusiasts*. But I am happy to reflect, I have not yet lost all charity for persons who dissent from me in opinion.

However, if I know my own heart, I would not contradict my real sentiments to purchase the approbation of the whole world. If I have any ambition, it is to be thought an *honest* man. And I will cheerfully submit to the insults of ignorance, and the lowering indignation of hypocrisy, if I can deserve this character.

To conclude, if you mean to appear any more in public, and to contend for an *eternity of torment*, and a *partial Salvation*, you ought to observe the following directions. *First*, prove that the happiness of his creatures was not the design of God, in their creation. *Secondly*, that his beloved Son did not, *taste death for every creature*. *Thirdly*, that the term *All men*, in scripture language, intends only *some* (viz) *some men, some women, some boys, some servants, some Spaniards, some Hollanders*. And for this, produce better authority than *Beza*, or *Austin*. *Fourthly*, prove that the word usually applied to the punishment of wicked men ever intends a *strict absolute eternity*, unless the subject to which it is applied requires it from a necessity in its own nature. Till you have done this, you in vain produce it in support of the vulgar opinion. And *Lastly*, prove that St. John was really mistaken, when he imagined he heard "every creature in heaven, earth and under the earth" shouting the divine praises. Do this, Sir, with candour, modesty and plainness, and you shall be heard with profound attention; and treated with every possible token of respect, by one who wishes well to you in common with mankind.

Boston, Nov. 14th. 1782.

2. 1945-1946

A circular ink stamp from the British Museum. The words "BRITISH" and "MUSEUM" are curved along the top and bottom inner edges of the circle, respectively. In the center, the date "20 JY 81" is stamped horizontally.

The following information was obtained from the records of the [redacted] Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, regarding the land ownership and management of the area described above:

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